

# IN OUR BACKYARD

JAN - 2 1991



## AN UPDATE FROM THE ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

### Season's Greetings

FROM ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

December 1990

Volume 1

Number 8

At this time of reflection and hope, it's worth remembering that the life we enjoy was won only through the efforts of past generations. And their achievements were remarkable.

As stewards of our natural resources, our forbears preserved great parks that are the envy of the world. They created water supply and sanitation systems that eliminated many feared diseases. They generated gas and electric power to bring heat and light to homes and factories, schools and hospitals. They farmed the land to feed a new nation. And they mined the earth's resources to enrich its economy.

As inheritors of this legacy, we bear a similar responsibility.

The lives of our children, and our children's children, will be governed by how well we respond to the demands of today's consumer society.

Controlling our consumption and managing the wastes we generate is essential to our continued enjoyment of clean

air, fresh water and healthy foods. Educating ourselves on the risks inherent in the use and disposal of chemicals is as critical to our survival as learning the rules of the road.

Already, Albertans have shown world leadership in environmental protection and education. And we can look back on a year in which our integrated system of waste management was improved and

expanded, in which participation in Toxic and Drug Round-Ups was greater than ever before, and in which the process of public education showed positive and promising results.

We have much to be grateful for this festive season.

To you and your family, we extend good wishes for a Peaceful Holiday and a Prosperous New Year.



Lisa McKinney, age 10, of Iron River, won the first ASWMC Christmas card contest with this imaginative entry.

- ▲ INTERVIEW:  
KEN SIMPSON
- ▲ PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- ▲ CHRISTMAS CARD  
CONTEST
- ▲ AT THE COMMUNITY  
LEVEL
- ▲ ALTERNATIVES
- ▲ NEW WASTE VENTURES
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Produced every two months by the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, "In Our Backyard" is intended to keep Albertans updated on issues and solutions in hazardous waste management. You can contribute to the process by "recycling" this newsletter. Pass it on to a friend with your comments. And, should you have suggestions you wish to share, pass them on to us. Our address, phone and fax number are on Page 4.



Alberta  
Special Waste  
Management  
Corporation

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This newsletter is printed  
on recycled paper.



## Public Input Sought into Proposed Plant Expansion

They came. They saw. They conferred. Over 100 people representing industry, industrial associations, waste generators, educational institutions, environmental groups, native communities, waste management study groups, and the three levels of government met on November 6th at Edmonton's Convention Inn South to talk about the proposed expansion of the Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre.

The multi-stakeholder meeting was one of the first steps in what will be an ongoing public consultation process. Its purpose was to identify the various issues which should be considered in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed expansion.

Following the morning session, participants were asked to take part in individual workshops covering particular areas of concern:

- ▲ Transportation
- ▲ Air Quality
- ▲ Vegetation, Soil, Land and Wildlife
- ▲ Fish and Water
- ▲ Health and Safety
- ▲ Socio-Economic Impacts

The concerns raised in these workshops were reported and summarized at the closing session.

Together with all conclusions from the conference, this input will help to pin down the issues to be considered in the Environmental Impact Assessment.



*Edmonton's Jacquie Champion, a specialist in environmental communications, served as Chairperson for the meeting.*

### MORE INFORMATION REQUESTED

At first listening, the most common concern appears to be a need for more information - on the type of wastes the Centre can, and might, handle; on how plant processes work; on transportation safety measures, on present and future stack emissions, on occupational health measures, and on the monitoring of water, land and wildlife.



*Joe Lukacs, President of Chem-Security (Alberta) Ltd., represented the operators of the Alberta Special Waste Management System.*

It's expected that these areas will be comprehensively covered when the EIA is presented for public review at a series of province-wide public meetings in the new year.

## "Joy to the World" Christmas Card Contest

Response to our first-ever Children's Christmas Card Contest was excellent. We received well over 70 entries from schools across Alberta - and the quality of design was extremely high.

The winning design was created by Lisa McKinney (10) a Grade 5 student at Iron River School, Iron River, Alberta. Lisa was awarded a \$100 gift certificate from a local book store for her school, together



*Lisa is presented with her award by Tom Thackeray, Director, Policy, Planning & Development, ASWMC.*

Initial judging, by a cross-section of people in the communications industry, was based on how well the designs reflected the 4Rs message.

Final judging, by a panel of four practicing designers and a print production specialist, also considered their suitability for printed reproduction.

with a framed "There is a Better Way" poster as a personal memento.

Our thanks go out to all the young people who took part - and we extend our congratulations on their imaginative and thought-provoking designs.

- from

September '90

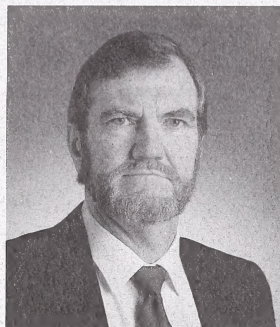
### CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

"Here's two dollars. Go clean up your room." B.C. may not be using quite the same technique, but it's working. Grants totalling nearly \$1.6 million have been made to Lower Mainland communities by the Ministry of Environment to assist household garbage recycling programs. The funding is part of the province's strategy for halving its production of solid waste by the year 2,000.



# Interview

**Environmental protection is likely to be the single most pressing issue of the next decade - and effective waste management will undoubtedly become even more important to our survival. How well is Alberta doing in the fight to save our fragile planet? We asked ASWMC President Ken Simpson to review the Corporation's record to date ... and offer some insights into the future.**



*Ken Simpson,  
President and CEO, ASWMC.*

## **A Conversation with Ken Simpson, President & CEO, ASWMC**

*Has the role of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation changed since it was founded?*

When the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation was created in 1984, its mandate was very simple: it was to ensure that there were sufficient facilities for the safe disposal of hazardous waste in Alberta.

With the successful establishment of Alberta's own Treatment Centre, we can now think in terms of a total system. The need has expanded from an operation centered strictly on treatment to the more general concept of comprehensive hazardous waste management.

It's a system involving various specialized operations - not least of which is a program of public education. People must know not only what we are doing - but why we are doing it - if they are to continue to give us their support.

*How does it work?*

Alberta's waste management philosophy is based on waste minimization - something we try to achieve through waste

reduction at source, re-use, recycling and recovery. These are the "Four Rs" we continue to promote. However, we also work past that concept to the management of the actual residues remaining after these processes.

So, in effect, we are looking at a closed loop - a total concept involving not only the management of generated hazardous wastes but starting prior to the process of generation itself. Beginning upstream of the waste generation stage, we look for ways of minimizing the volume of wastes produced.

*So the Corporation's role goes beyond that of managing treatment and disposal?*

Yes. As it must, if we are to achieve the most cost-effective use of our facilities. It's a comprehensive system of management involving public education, promotion of the "Four Rs", collection systems, storage, brokerage of wastes, pre-treatment, handling, and transportation - all in addition to the supervision of treatment and disposal processes.

*Obviously, your responsibilities have expanded considerably?*

That's correct. And that's because any system for handling waste flows must, of necessity, be an evolving thing. It will continue to change - and it will never be totally complete. As more elements enter the system, we can expect to see more fine tuning.

At present, for instance, we are adapting our operations to include the management of household hazardous wastes, the coordination of drug round-ups, and the disposal of laboratory chemicals.

*Looking at the past three years, how well would you say the Corporation has fulfilled its original mandate?*

I think the Corporation has come a long way since it was established. Alberta has always been a leader in waste management and with the opening of the Swan Hills plant in 1987, we confirmed our position as the most advanced waste management jurisdiction in North America - if not the world.

We are the envy of many other jurisdictions - having a full-scale, comprehensive, management system in place with the ability to handle a wide diversity of wastes.

As far as our mandate is concerned, however, I feel there are still some challenges out there

- one of the most serious of which is the problem of how to maximize the efficient use of scarce resources

such as capital and manpower.

*Can you explain?*

On the international scene, we're already observing a great scarcity of resources available for environmental management. As nations respond to such developing problems as global warming, ozone depletion, ocean dumping, and so on, there will be an increasing drain on these resources. Inevitably, special waste management will just have to line up with all the other demands on the system.

*And in Alberta?*

Here, we're looking at the same sort of shortages. Obvi-

ously, there are priorities to be considered in allotting money for treatment facilities and new technology. But we're also looking at the manpower component. The shortage of manpower is already evident and we're seeing more and more demands on the few trained people we have. Unless we commit ourselves to training more people in the whole area of environmental management, we can expect some very serious shortfalls in next few years.

*Are we not putting our money into environmental affairs?*

I think there's a difference between what people want - and what they are actually willing to do without. We're seeing that now. While the polls indicate that people are very concerned about the environment and really want positive action, there is an understandable reluctance to commit their money to the necessary problem-solving - with increased taxes, perhaps fewer jobs in some areas, and the possibility of having to forego some familiar luxuries. We're going to have to wait and see.

*Looking at the bigger global picture - are you optimistic about waste management practices in general?*

We are seeing some promising

trends. There is a lot more emphasis on waste minimization and recycling, and greater concern over products that

have toxic residues. At the householder or local level, people are starting to switch their buying habits. In the next decade, I think we will see a greater concentration on the more global aspects of waste reduction and minimization. This will mean some fairly drastic changes within corporations, and with government practices.

One of the things that will help this process along will be a realistic cost for the treatment of residues. In Alberta, we're experiencing that with the Swan Hills plant - where the relatively high price list does a lot to make peo-

***"I think there's a difference between what people want - and what they are actually willing to do without."***



ple rethink their waste generation habits.

When faced with true cost of treatment, I think most companies will carefully assess their options. Rather than pay a high treatment cost, they will look at options like waste minimization.

*Still looking at the world stage, do you think we are going to be able to handle the waste question in time?*

I hope so. I'm qualifying that because I've seen a lot of situations around the world where the problems of basic survival far outweigh those of waste management. On a priority basis, waste management will not be in the same league with many of these other purely survival questions.

Of course, waste management, taken to its ultimate conclusion, is a survival question and if we don't manage our wastes properly, it could be a matter of survival for the planet. However, where countries are faced with questions of starvation, overpopulation, and climate change, I really wonder if we'll see the undertakings in waste management that are necessary.

*On the local scene, what do you think it will take to get the cooperation of ordinary consumers in managing hazardous waste?*

I have a lot of faith in the average consumer. We've already seen that much of the impetus for change comes from people who have not had a lot of scientific training. They've grasped the situation very quickly and they've demonstrated a willingness to modify their own lifestyles. Albertans have shown an enthusiastic response with regard to the actions that can be taken in the household and in the community. So I have a lot of hope for the future here.

*So you feel that positive change is under way?*

Yes, I do. The challenge to us is to maintain the confidence of the public in order to carry out the necessary changes. While it's gratifying to see people supporting the waste management program, we do have to give them

the facts they need to make choices. We have to supply them with alternatives, and be responsive to their concerns.

*Are there things we should be doing to improve our present system?*

***"...we're already observing a great scarcity of resources available for environmental management."***

At present, Alberta is the leading jurisdiction in North America as far as waste management is concerned. We have a very broad based system of secure landfills and recycling options, with systems in place to look after such problem commodities as pesticide containers, waste drugs, and used oil - so we are well-prepared for the future.

The immediate challenge will be to maintain our present momentum; to ensure that we have systems in place to look after new waste streams. Alberta is in much less danger than other areas of being inundated with waste. We were fortunate in getting a head start on the waste management problem and we certainly intend to hold, if not improve, our present position.

*What do you consider to be the most significant achievements for the Corporation to date?*

Establishing the Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre and bringing it into efficient operation is clearly a significant achievement, not just for the Corporation but for our private sector partner and the people of Alberta. The facility is up and running, and we continue to modify and improve its capabilities.

But we're also very pleased with our successes on the public scene. Our initiatives with local study groups, with citizens' advisory committees, and with community liaison committees have helped to build a level of trust in Alberta.

If there's anything I'm proud of, it's the fact that we're not in an adversarial situation where the public and the Corporation are each mistrustful of each other. We talk. And we cooperate. And that's something we want to maintain.

*What kind of things can we expect from the Alberta Special*

*Waste Management Corporation in future?*

With the expansion of our mandate to include a systematic approach to special waste management, we have to review all options. In the immediate future, we're looking at more transfer stations, supported by bulking depots and brokerage operations.

Research is very important and we are beginning initiatives with research laboratories and private sector firms.

And in the longer term, there is always the possibility of additional treatment facilities, (if necessary) most likely run by the private sector, in conjunction with our corporation.

We have to be prepared for all possible eventualities with a system that is flexible enough to handle a variety of materials.

*Do you think that Albertans are being sufficiently educated in the need for the practice of home hazardous waste management?*

Again, I think we've come a long way in this. We have an excellent communications group that's putting together very innovative programs and I think our publications, speakers' bureau and community study groups are second to none.

So I'm very pleased with what's happened in the past. But again the challenge is there. We will always need to keep the process going - in order to maintain awareness of waste management problems and to reeducate people in new aspects of the system. It's a long-term program aimed at a considerable change in attitudes. At the same time, we are looking at possible curriculum development for the schools which will involve the supply of instructional materials to the school system from kindergarten to Grade 12.

*Looking at Alberta's experience over the past three years, would you say that we have generated any new ideas and approaches that can benefit other provinces and jurisdictions?*

Absolutely. In fact, the marketing of our technology and knowledge has become a key part of our operation. We are asked on many occasions to help other jurisdictions with special waste

management problems - especially with regard to siting facilities and community participation - and we are accepted as the world leaders in this area. It is to our advantage to promote that skill and expertise.

*Are new developments coming up apart from the system that could be marketed in this way?*

Yes. Beside the systems we are developing for our own use, there are other innovations that have potential applications elsewhere. The biological treatment of wastes is one possibility. Another is the idea of transformer decontamination. We are presently developing a unique furnace that will cleanse contaminated equipment such as transformers and enable them to be recycled. Such technology could be quite marketable.

*Are we dedicating enough resources to the area of special waste management?*

Yes. The Alberta people, through their government, have shown that they recognize the value of the Special Waste Management System - and they support it. We have an adequate budget to keep the system going and we are consequently able to keep the costs to the generator down. While the Alberta taxpayer presently subsidizes the cost of special waste treatment to some extent, the alternative - that of burdening our industries with onerous prices to treat their wastes - is not desirable at the present time since it would put Alberta generators at a competitive disadvantage, compared to other jurisdictions.

*So that's what we might see coming up in the Nineties. What might we be looking at in 1999?*

If all goes well, the Corporation might be out of business - which is exactly what we would like to

see. Our sole reason for being here is to ensure that special waste management facilities are in place and that the system is being used wisely and properly. Ideally, we would like to see those goals accomplished by the turn of the century.

***"Research is very important ..."***

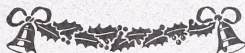


# IN OUR BACKYARD



Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation

AN ALBERTA CROWN CORPORATION



## WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF EVERYTHING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON...

Clean air. Clean land. Clean water. At ASWMC, we're working to bring you the best of everything. With your help, we've already made great strides in environmental protection – and 1990 was a year of special achievement. It saw the **installation of a new rotary**

**kiln** for the treatment of hazardous wastes, the **expansion of educational programs** in special waste management, and **increased involvement from the private sector** with the opening of new Transfer Stations.

## AND A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**Community involvement in 1990 was greater than ever** – resulting in record results from Corporation-sponsored clean-up programs. *The number of communities participating in Toxic Round-Ups increased*

*from 65 to 120; the amount of materials collected being in excess of half a million litres. And Alberta's Great Drug Round-Up, collected more than 20 tonnes of old, used and outdated medicines!*

... and in our community:

### Prevent Pollution by Reducing Christmas Wrappings

Don't wrap gifts with expensive paper. Use: tea towels, fabrics, etc., that can be used for something else; plain paper decorated with drawings, single ribbon, cut-outs from last year's printed Christmas wrap or cards; the good parts of last year's wrapping paper (save for next year) don't wrap attractive gift boxes -- they are already pretty. Make your own name cards by decorating them yourself. If you fancy wrap some gifts be sure to reduce wrappings on others. This saves paper, saves expense, develops your creativity. Others do it - you can too!

## Alternatives

Time to polish up the best silver for your holiday guests? If you would prefer not to handle such hazardous ingredients as acidified thiourea and sulphuric acid – common ingredients of silver polish – here's a shining suggestion:

Product	Hazard	Recommended Disposal Method	Alternative
Silver-Polishes	Corrosive, toxic	Store safely until a Toxic Round-up is organized in your community	Soak in boiling water with baking soda and a piece of aluminium

Got a mouse in the house? For rural Albertans, it's a problem that poses a constant dilemma: you can ignore the occasional pest and risk it spoiling the food... or put out mouse poison and risk doing away with the kids. We recommend that you try the following, safer alternative. If this doesn't work, consider getting a mean and hungry cat.

Rat and Mouse Poisons	Toxic	Store safely until a Toxic Round-up is organized in your community	Use live traps, remove food supply
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## Community Column Catching on

As part of its educational efforts, ASWMC runs a regular informational column in community newspapers. The "In Our Backyard" feature offers some pertinent facts on special waste management and makes space available for local groups to print their own notices relating to environmental protection.

The column has been welcomed by communities and newspapers alike - and has so far served to promote events ranging from toxic round-ups to the best way to wrap Christmas presents.

### - from WASTE BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL November '90

*Calling for a recount.* Richard Gilbert Ph.D., long-time Toronto City Councillor and author of some 200 books and articles, questions David Suzuki's 1989 claim that, "Japan recycles 50% of its garbage, and Canada 4%."

Following a recent fact-finding trip, he sides with a 1988 *Washington Post* report which states: "Japan's environmental protection agency indicates that Japan's overall recycling rate is closer to 6% by volume. Though these recycling estimates vary, what is clear is that the majority of the rest of Japan's waste is processed in waste-to-energy facilities."

Councillor Gilbert points out that the discrepancies may have arisen from a mistranslation of "incineration" or "diversion from landfill" as "recycling."



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## New Waste Ventures

### WEARMOUTH OPENS NEW COMMERCIAL TRANSFER STATION IN CALGARY

Wearmouth Waste-Tech Inc. is pleased with the success of its new Transfer Station in Calgary. Originally planned with a 21 drum (4300 litre) capacity, the station has expanded in its first three months to accommodate 120 drums - or 24000 litres. The station is located on a seven-acre site in Calgary's industrial district and, according to company president

Jeff Wearmouth, is proving a convenient facility for industries right across southern Alberta.

*"We're making hazardous waste disposal more accessible," he says, "particularly to clients who generate smaller quantities and who want it dealt with fast and efficiently. We provide facilities for sorting, repackaging, and safe interim*

*storage - and we're quick to respond in urgent situations."*

If you're interested in learning more - particularly

about Waste-Tech's collection service for small quantities - you're invited to call (403) 236-2202 in Calgary.

### BEISECKER BIOMEDICAL PLANT ON SCHEDULE, AWAITS EQUIPMENT

Calto Industries Inc. has completed construction of its new dedicated biomedical incinerator plant in Beisecker and is presently waiting for some final equipment from its U.S. supplier to meet its scheduled start-up of January 1st.

The plant is located 67 kilometres northeast of Calgary, and is a project of Calto and its subsidiaries, International

Mediawaste Inc. and U.S. Enerwaste Corporation.

When operational, the state-of-the-art plant will provide safe disposal of infectious wastes from medical and veterinary offices and institutions, as well as disposing of "sharps" and dated pharmaceuticals.

Calto Industries Inc. is a Canadian-owned public company, based in Calgary.

## CALL DIRECT:

#### ▲ For information on:

- Hazardous Waste Management Programs in Alberta
- Toxic Round-Ups
- Community Study Groups

**ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE MANAGEMENT  
CORPORATION**  
1-800-272-8873  
422-5029 (Edmonton)  
428-9627 (Fax)

#### ▲ For information on the transportation of dangerous goods:

**ALBERTA PUBLIC  
SAFETY SERVICES**  
1-800-272-9600

#### ▲ For a directory of waste management companies in Alberta:

**ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE SERVICES  
ASSOCIATION**  
424-6384 (Edmonton)

#### ▲ For information on:

- Used Oil Program
- Recycling: Newspaper, Metals, Plastics, Clothing

**RECYCLING BRANCH,  
ALBERTA  
ENVIRONMENT**  
427-5838 (Edmonton)  
297-5925 (Calgary)

#### ▲ To report an environmental emergency or to register a complaint:

**POLLUTION CONTROL  
DIVISION, ALBERTA  
ENVIRONMENT**  
1-800-222-6514

#### ▲ To access the clearing house that puts potential users of waste materials in contact with waste producers:

**ALBERTA WASTE  
MATERIALS  
EXCHANGE**  
450-5408 (Edmonton)

**ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE MANAGEMENT  
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